

LITERATURE AND ART

... Conducted by LEW HEAD

"EMBLEMS OF FIDELITY" by James Lane Allen, published by Doubleday, Page & Company, is a "comedy in letters." It is just one of the many little pieces of wisdom from the movies. The conception is clever, the development of the plot by the simplest sort of correspondence is unique in literature, and the climax is ridiculously humorous. That a few ferns ever before reached the dignity of culminating in a near-tragedy, with international complications, I have serious doubts. A foreign author, impressed with the description of a growth of Kentucky ferns by an American author, requests the latter to forward him an assortment for his garden. In perfect good faith, the American, deeply honored, follows the suggestion—as he thinks. Later correspondence results in an invitation to the young American to spend a few weeks—both he and his wife—with the celebrated Englishman. The American is unmarried, but on the strength of the wonderful invitation, manages to induce the girl of his heart to become married and a date is set. But—the florist, to whom has been given the commission to forward

"THE RIDDLE OF THE PURPLE EMPEROR"

is a Thomas W. and Mary E. Henshaw "Cleck" mystery tale that is all mystery from cover to cover. Whoever seeks the odd and unusual in ballroom, need go no further than this book, published by Doubleday, Page & Company. It has all the element, all the component parts, all the excitement, thrill and novelty that mystery can suggest. Beginning with the "Purple Emperor," which is a sacred jewel stolen from the idols of India many years before, a train of thefts, murders, disguised identities, underground passages, circumstantial incidents that come dangerously near implicating the leading characters, and the "Purple Emperor" furnish food for suspense that make it quite a task to drop the book, even for a few hours sleep or a much needed dinner.

To provide the captivating climax, "Cleck," the "Man of Forty Faces," and the "Vanishing Cracksman," famous Scotland Yard operatives, solves each and every problem with fascinating cleverness and the ease of one whose observation misses never the slightest circumstance to make a link in the chain of assembling evidence. An ill-kept old English court is the scene of the series of events, occupied by Hon. Miss Cheyne, a recluse. Her niece, Lady Margaret Cheyne, returning from a Paris convent at 18, comes into possession of a large assortment of valuable jewels bequeathed to her by her father. Her aunt, being murdered by the leader of the "Pentagon" gang, is impersonated by this robber who is working to the interest of the Hindus, to recover the "Purple Emperor." With Lady Margaret, he goes to London to secure the jewels on her eighteenth birthday. Returns with them to Cheyne Court, Lady Margaret is held a prisoner, while Blake the impersonator, secures a number of kangaroos from a London circus. Possessing himself of the jewels, he stores them in the pouches of the kangaroos, hidden in a secret room beneath the house. On the day of the capture, the animals are about to be removed by a travelling circus, when "Cleck" springs his denouement.

The mighty clever manner in which the Henshaws manage to maneuver Lady Margaret, Sir Edgar, Jennifer Wynne, Dr. Varrall, Bobby Wynne and others along the edges of the developing events, just sufficiently to make the reader believe that he is first, to be implicated in the murders, and exceedingly novel. These suspicious circumstances at times completely mystify "Cleck" but, at no time, are important enough to sidetrack him from the main theory. In fact, it is this veteran's stubborn pursuit of a once-established theory that has ever kept him so unblemished a hero in the other Henshaw mysteries, such as "Cleck's Government Cases," "Cleck of Scotland Yard," and "The Riddle of the Night."

TWELVE MEN, by Theodore Dreiser, Ron & Liverist. When Mr. Dreiser piled yesterday upon the story undoubtedly true, of some attention-compelling personality with whom Mr. Dreiser has come in contact. In some cases, "Twelve Men" for instance, the man was an intimate friend of Mr. Dreiser's; in others he was a passenger. One was a door of good works in a small Connecticut town whom Mr. Dreiser went to see because he had heard a group of fishermen agree that he was the one who had made the story of a little boy who had come to Broadway, and read the amazingly realistic story of Mr. Dreiser's brother, Paul "Dreiser," who wrote "On the Banks of the Wabash" and other popular songs, and lived the gay, generous, unprincipled life that New York eagerly provides for those who want it and can pay for it. From this we run into the tenderly told tales of the country doctor—and then comes "De Maupassant, Junior," a story that should be read by all young writers. Here is a book of a new sort—one too good to miss. Not only it is a well balanced analysis of the men Mr. Dreiser has met—it is also a penetrating, though unconscious analysis of Mr. Dreiser himself. It might well be called "Thirteen Men."

THE BOOK AT HAND. It is the book nearest at hand—the one that is easiest to get—the almost invariably claims first attention and immediate reading. The force of suggestion coupled with the path of least endeavor, work in the realms of literature quite as effectively as anywhere else, and it only remained for Harlan H. Ballard, librarian of the Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Mass., to demonstrate this fact conclusively through a recent investigation that he carried on.

In giving the results of his inquiry among the libraries of the country, Mr. Ballard states that the choice of 74 per cent of the books drawn from libraries depend upon some one of the following reasons:

"I took the book because it was nearest my hand."
"Because it was easiest to get."
"Because I saw it lying on the desk."
Contrasted with these rather astounding admissions on the part of three-fourths of the readers, other answers on the slips given to each person drawing books show that their choice was influenced as follows:

- (a) Recommendation of a friend 5 p.c.
- (b) Author's reputation 1 1/2 p.c.
- (c) Printed reviews and advertisements 3 p.c.
- (d) Interest in subject 3 p.c.
- (e) Influence of library 3 p.c.

All of which merely goes to show that while many factors together determine the choice of the reader, the reading public, one prime factor stands pre-eminent. Proximity and the power of suggestion do more than anything else to influence the selection of reading material.

Librarians can thus do much to guide the taste of their readers, by putting books where the people "fall over them"; bookstores by employing similar means of display can do as much in furthering sales and increasing the buying public.

ings mean nothing except that an idiot happened to have a pencil in hand as he read. No single page is identified, no single line is made to stand out; all is marked and nothing is distinguished. One would not care so much if this sort of thing were not done too frequently in public library books and notoriously in books of private libraries that find their way back to the bookshelves. Frequently, too, the reader will scribble an idea in the margin—blurt it with rapid writing, that is, usually do the writing with an indelible pencil or ink.

Montaigne described his books; and Isaac Watts has said: "If the books which you read are your own, mark with pen or pencil the most considerable things in them which you desire to remember. Then you may read the book the second time with half the trouble, by your eye running over the paragraphs which your pencil has not yet marked. It is but a very weak objection against this practice to say, 'I shall spoil my book,' for I persuade myself that you did not buy it as a bookseller, to sell it again, but as a scholar, to improve your mind by it; and if the mind be improved, your advantage is abundant, though your book yields less money to your executors."

But notice that even Watts in defense of the pencil justifies it only in books one intends to reread; and if one reads as a student, it is precious little benefit to be had from mere marking of lines and margin. But if one goes to the reading with a notebook, copies down outlines, this week, the republican plans for "constructive legislation for the period following the war."

PHOENIX PUBLIC LIBRARY. The following list contains about one-half of the books added to the library during the past week. A considerable number of children's books have been added which are not herein listed:

Sunset Canada, Archie Bell.
Work of significance of a Jewish State, A. A. Berle.
Practice of Self-Culture, Hugh Black.
Scotland of the Scots, G. Blake.
Course in Narrative Writing, Gertrude Buck.
Agricultural Bacteriology, Herbert Conn.
Human Side of Birds, Royal Dixon.
Spirit of New Thought, H. W. Dresser.
Vanished Halls and Cathedrals of France, G. W. Edwards.
Wonders of Instinct, J. H. C. Fabre.
How to Make Concrete Garden Furniture and Accessories, J. T. Fallon.
Alone in the Caribbean, P. A. Fenger.
Social Problems in Porto Rico, F. K. Frazier.
"Tramping" Through Mexico and Guatemala, Harry A. Frank.
Everyman's Chemistry, Ellwood Hendrick.
Building by a Builder, Benjamin A. Howes.
Life Insurance, S. S. Huebner.
South America, W. H. Koebel.
Our Hawaii, Mrs. Jack London.
Language of Color, M. Lockie.
Design and Construction in Wood, Wm. Noyes.
Successful Canning and Preserving, Ola Powell.
Water Color Painting, A. W. Rich.
College Algebra, H. L. Rietz.
Forestry, H. Woodrow Wilson.
E. E. Robinson.
Book of New York, Robert Shackleton.
Application of Efficiency Principles, C. H. Shepard.
How to Debate, E. D. Shorter.
Aristocrats of the Garden, E. H. Wilson.

ADOLESCENCE. E. P. Dutton & Company are publishing an American edition of a little book by Stephen Fagot, the famous English surgeon, called "Adolescence." It contains one of a series of lectures given to Oxford University Extension students in the summer of 1918, whose subject theme was the various phases of the reconstruction of British life in the near future. The particular problems with which this lecture deals, the right handling of young people during those critical years—the middle "teens" when they are developing into the consciousness of manhood and womanhood, is one that is always with fathers and mothers and teachers of every nation, and Dr. Fagot's sane and understanding advice will be found peculiarly helpful by every one who carries that particular burden. He thinks that fathers, mothers and teachers should meet frankly, seriously and with reverence the puzzled and questioning minds of children, about God and sex and should be prepared to meet their questions with the truth. "The greatest thing of all," he says, "is careful preparation. To answer a child with evasive or lying nonsense is to offend the child; and we have it in good authority that we deserve for that offense the milestone round our necks and the depths of the sea."

NEW BOOKS ANNOUNCED. The following books are to be published by Houghton Mifflin Company on March 22nd: "A Man Four-Square," William Macleod Raine's vivid romance of western life; "The Old Gray Homestead," Frances Parkinson Keyes' "home" novel of rural New England; "James Willard Schultz's 'Hunting Eagle,' a story of a young Indian warrior girl; 'Letters of Harry James Smith,' the breezy and intimate correspondence of the author of 'The Tailor-Made Man' and 'Mrs. Bumpstead Leigh'; 'Iran Speaks,' a choice collection of sayings and beliefs uttered by wounded Russian soldiers, translated by Thomas Whittemore; Frederick Sleath's 'Sniper Jackson,' a vivid revelation of the important work of snipers in this war; and Arthur Stanwood Pier's 'Dormitory Days,' another of the stories of school-boy life which have so charmed youthful readers.

FRENCH FICTION. The third volume in their "Library of French Fiction" will be ready for publication by E. P. Dutton and company, about the end of this month. It will be P. Van derent's "Two Banks of the Seine," a demarkation in the geography and population of Paris which will return vividly to the minds of all Americans who spent much time there in the years before the war. The book gives a broader and deeper understanding of the life of the French capital than do most novels dealing with Paris. The editor of the series is Barnet J. Beyer, sometime lecturer in the Sorbonne. Six more volumes of French fiction are now either in press or in process of translation.

PULLING OF A "REVOLUTION." While bolsheviks are plotting "to overthrow the government by force," while strikes are multiplying, and "Reds" are being deported, and statesmen and editors are warning the nation of these dangers, The Literary Digest has gathered an impressive

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